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Superintendent

N.E.W.S

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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ARIZONA SCHOOLS CHIEF TOM HORNE ANNOUNCES ARIZONA STUDENTS ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP®) PARTICIPATION RATES AND PERFORMANCE HIGHER THAN NATIONAL AVERAGE – REPORTS EQUITY GAP CLOSING

PHOENIX (Wednesday, February 13, 2008) – Arizona Schools Chief Tom Horne today announced that the increase in Arizona students participating in Advanced Placement programs is higher than the national average. The numbers of Arizona students taking AP® tests during 2006-2007 rose 17%, compared with a 9.5% rise nationally, and the number of AP® tests taken in Arizona were up 18.7% compared to 9.8% nationally.

The AP® test is an objective measure of student performance for the College Board's Advanced Placement program. Students earning a minimum score of 3 on an AP® test can earn college credit, advanced placement, or both at most colleges and universities.

"This hard data again demonstrates we are increasing the rigor in course-work taken by Arizona students. These numbers are a testament to the capability of Arizona's students to not just participate in what is widely considered one of the most rigorous high school programs in the country – but to also succeed," Horne said.

In addition to the improved overall public school participation and performance in Advanced Placement courses, the gap between ethnic groups of Arizona students participating in Advanced Placement courses is steadily closing. In 2003, non-white students made up 28% of Arizona's AP® test takers – while in 2007 that percentage has increased to 36%.

In a single year, following an Arizona Education Department initiative on low income students in Advanced Placement courses, the number of students participating doubled. These are bright students who, previously were not being sufficiently challenged.

The Arizona Department of Education's long-term commitment of championing equal access to rigorous curriculum for all students, and its aggressive implementation of two U.S. Department of Education federal grant programs – Arizona's Advanced Placement Incentive Program *AZASPIRES* and the AP® Test Fee Waiver programs - are significantly closing the equity gap in student participation. The design of both of these programs focuses special attention on the unique needs of underserved and low SES students. The AP® Test Fee Waiver program provides all public school students who qualify for free or reduced price meals to take AP® tests at no cost.

From 2005-2006 to 2006-2007, low income student participation in AP® courses among public schools participating in AZASPIRES increased 128% from 858 to 1,956, and the number of AP® tests taken in these schools increased 220% from 452 to 1,446.

Additionally, from 2003-2004 to 2006-2007, the AP® Test Fee Waiver Program has led to a cumulative 180% increase in the number of AP® tests taken in Arizona's public schools by low-income students, from 1270 to 3,552. Encouragingly, another 56% increase for 2007-2008 is projected, for a total of 5,550 exams taken by low-income Arizona students.

Horne added: "I have been a tireless advocate for increasing rigor in the classroom for all students, and we continue to see the benefits of high expectations and demanding excellence from students. The fact more students, and more minority students, are participating in Advanced Placement programs in Arizona than ever before – and scores AP® tests have increased alongside that expansion – shows our efforts in championing rigor are having a powerful effect."

Further information about the Advanced Placement Incentive Program can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/print/programs/apincent/index.html> and the Advanced Placement Test Fee Program at <http://www.ed.gov/print/programs/apfee/index.html>

** Data compiled using the College Board's Report to the Nation for Advanced Placement and from Arizona's Advanced Placement Incentive and Advanced Placement Test Fee Waiver Programs.*

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